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**Testimony re: HB 4059 – South Central Education Policy Consortium (SCEPC)
Representing: Barry, Branch, Calhoun, Jackson, Lenawee and Monroe ISDs and Local
Districts**

On behalf of the SCEPC, I am here to support HB 4059 by Representative Hughes to eliminate the sunset on the use of Public School Retirees in Critical Shortage Positions, as Substitute Teachers and Instructional Coaches.

As some of you will remember, prior to 2010, there were minimal limitations on the use of public school retirees especially related to identified critical shortage positions. In 2010, as a part of a very extensive “early out” incentive, Michigan effectively eliminated the use of public school retirees retiring after July 1, 2010. This early out incentive was created for two purposes: a) to help reduce costs in public education and b) to create job opportunities within the system.

In 2011, following a much higher than anticipated number of retirements, local school districts began to see critical shortages in filling school positions directly and negatively impacting services to students. At that time, Section 61 of MPERS (Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System) Act was amended to allow the use of post-2010 retirees in specific positions and with specific limitations.

In 2012, as part of an extensive MPERS Act reform, Section 61 again was amended in two important ways: 1) to create a sunset on the use of post-2010 retirees so that future legislators would measure this use against current demand, and 2) to require that local school districts and eligible reporting entities would pay the Unfunded Accrued Liability portion of the MPERS cost (20.96%) for any retiree providing services.

As you are also aware, this sunset expired on July 1, 2014. While there was considerable conversation about the continued difficulty that school districts are experiencing in finding appropriate and qualified individuals to fill such positions, legislation was not adopted to extend the sunset.

At this time, there is clear evidence school districts are still experiencing a labor shortage in critical positions. The Critical Shortage list is one that is created by the Department of Education with significant input from universities, school districts and intermediate school districts to measure the labor demand against potential supply of teachers. Substitute teachers are critical to our system due to a need to support our classrooms while allowing teachers to experience training or shared conversations about student learning and often retirees are the best substitute teachers when providing services to our most fragile students. Finally, instructional coaches are positions often best filled by recent retirees as they are master teachers and they have a high degree of credibility in providing *required* services to Priority Schools.

For these reasons, we strongly encourage you to support HB 4059 and to enact this legislation in time for school districts to make employment decisions beginning in April 2015 for the upcoming 2015-16 School Year.

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